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A QUARTERLY REVIEW OF THE AMERICAN CONGREGATION OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST

VOL. XXIV WINTER 1953 NO. 4

COWLEY

A Quarterly Magazine of Subjects Missionary and Religious

Published by the American Congregation of the Society of Saint John the Evangelist, at the four seasons

The Society of Saint John the Evangelist is a Religious Community of Mission Priests and Brothers, serving the world-wide Anglican Communion in the United States, Canada, England, Scotland, India, South Africa, Japan and the Bahamas.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS. Post free, $1. Single copies, 25 cents. Subscriptions should be sent to the Secretary of Publications, 980 Memorial Drive, Cambridge 38, Massachusetts. Checks should be made payable to the Secretary of Publications. No charge for foreign postage.

EXCHANGE PUBLICATIONS and books for review should be sent to the Reverend Father Editor, S.S.J.E., 980 Memorial Drive, Cambridge 38, Massachusetts.

ADVERTISING RATES may be obtained by applying to the Editor.

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RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION, INDIAN HILLS, COLORADO
JULY, 1952

Father Smith, S.S.J.E., speaking to children

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FATHER BENSON AND THE COUNSELS OF PERFECTION

By FATHER SMITH, S.S.J.E.

(*A sermon preached at the Church of Saint John the Evangelist, Boston, on Sunday, January 11, 1953.*)

"Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding." (Proverbs 4:1)

THIRTY-EIGHT years ago this coming Wednesday a nonagenarian died in a city far distant from this one. Ordinarily such an event would occur unnoticed outside a rather limited circle. Aged men and women have died and continue to die daily in far and near points on this earth. In most cases no trumpet heralds their departure from this life. But the death to which I refer was that of one who, directly or indirectly, has influenced and continues to influence the lives of each one of us connected with this church. I am speaking of Father Richard Meux Benson, the Founder of the Society of Saint John the Evangelist who, on the 14th of January, 1915, left the fair city of Oxford and passed into a more glorious one in the life beyond the grave.

At the Society's church in Oxford it has now become an established custom that a sermon on some aspect of the spirit and teaching of Father Benson be delivered on the Sunday within the Octave of the Feast of Saint John the Evangelist. It is to the discharge of such a task that we turn on this Sunday preceding the anniversary of the Father's death, by attempting to comprehend something of the Father's teaching concerning those counsels of perfection which outlined his own life, and which have governed the lives of his spiritual sons to this day. So we consider Father Benson and the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience not only to eulogize a holy servant of God, but also to enable those of you who worship here to understand more clearly the vocation of those who have ministered and continue to minister to you in this beloved church.

I

Poverty

Richard Meux Benson was born with a silver spoon in his mouth. The son of wealthy parents who owned comfortable residences and employed innumerable servants, he possessed everything his heart desired. He was tutored privately, in time entered Christ Church, Oxford, and ultimately was ordained a Priest in the Church of England. The private means with which he supplemented his income as a vicar, enabled him to travel extensively on the Continent, and he

took pleasure in the things of the world such as music and literature. But during these formative years of his life God was directing him and preparing his heart for the great day of decision when by taking the vow of poverty he formally renounced all personal wealth.

Every man who enters the Society of Saint John the Evangelist must similarly make such a renunciation. On the day of his Profession he must give up his possessions, by willing them to the Society or by making some other suitable disposition of them. His goods are no longer his and henceforth he cannot accumulate belongings. The Fathers who serve churches receive no salaries. The Fathers who conduct parochial missions and retreats receive offerings, not for their personal use, but for the benefit of the Society as a whole.

But wealth is to be desired no more for the Society as a whole than for any individual member. Father Benson was convinced that his Society would be blessed most richly in those places where it was poor. History has proved how right he was. It was the inspiring example of Father O'Neill living for so long in poverty among the people of India which laid the firm foundation for the Society's work in that country. It is the genuine poverty observed by our Japanese Fathers which has commended the Religious Life among people in the Land of the Rising Sun. Father Benson wrote in his Rule of Life, "If the Society in any place is poor, look to God to do great things by it. God has chosen the poor, the weak things of the world to confound the mighty."

The poverty which Father Benson envisioned went far beyond the mere repudiation of personal property, however. He recognized, as our Lord Himself did, that those who are weighed down with riches cannot give adequate thought to the things of the spirit. Therein lies the peril of all wealth. "The wealth of this world," warned Father Benson, "is a burden in its acquisition, its retention, and its expenditure." Because material possessions distract and worry, the Religious is enjoined to put them aside in order to rest wholly and completely in God. Although rich people may devote a portion of their incomes to philanthropy, it is that utter repudiation even of the desire for wealth which in the final analysis contributes most to the glory of God. "God is glorified", writes Father Benson, "by the most perfect acts of the soul, and none is greater than the poverty which rests most entirely on Himself."

II

Chastity

The vow of chastity which Father Benson embraced similarly involves the principle of renunciation. As poverty demands the forsaking of wealth, chastity requires the complete surrender of one's natural desires to God. Father Benson instructs us, "By poverty we give up external things; by chastity we give up our own bodies. By poverty we acknowledge our own nothingness; by chastity we cleave to God."

Basically, of course, taking the vow of chastity excludes the possibility of marriage. For adopting such a position Father Benson, in common with all who have attempted to live celibate lives, gained the opposition of many critics. On one occasion, following an address he gave in Oxford on the religious state, a member of his audience arose to deliver a rebuttal in the form of a panegyric on the glories of the married state and family life. The Father's sole reply was that he hoped he need not say how entirely he agreed with every word that had just been said. Someone has written, "It is the victims of blighted love who fill convents and monasteries". Richard Meux Benson was a living refutation of that oft-repeated inanity. So tightly was his heart packed with the pure love of God that he renounced the role of an earthly father to raise up a spiritual family in Christ. This was Father Benson's primary motive in taking the vow of chastity.

Sharing as he did the wisdom of the saints, Father Benson recognized that the virtue of chastity was one which had to be carefully preserved through the exercise of certain safeguards. Specifically he recommended ruling the thoughts, ruling the affections, and the regulation of one's time.

In our Lord's parable of the shortsighted householder, condemnation is directed towards those who create dangerous spiritual vacuums. So the Father Founder warns, that in driving out all thoughts unworthy of God's presence and cognizance we are at once to substitute holy imagery — "Jesus instituting the Holy Eucharist, suffering upon the Cross, or glorified in heaven."

Father Benson forbids excessive affection towards persons. Any human friendship is to be raised above the merely natural level. In all relationships God's children are to be loved "with the higher love of spiritual solicitude" while we remain "separated from them by the outward barrier of an entire consecration to Christ". In all his pastoral relationships the Priest Religious must constantly endeavor

to draw individuals, not to himself, but to our Lord and His Church. "Try to be as impassible and impersonal as possible", Father Benson counsels each member of his Society, "that, being only a minister of Jesus and thine own individuality being lost, the Personality of Christ may come out to them."

As to the regulation of time, the monastic day is planned to be so replete with prayer and industry that there can be no opportunity for idleness. In the early days of community life at Cowley the brethren arose at 5:30 a.m., and Compline was not recited until 10 p.m. It was a long, active day; but, even after Compline, the Father Founder worked on into the small hours of the morning, hymning to God with spiritual letters and writings. "We are called to be the most toilsome, the most laborious of men", he taught. And he himself set the pace!

III

Obedience

So too in the matter of obedience, it is the example of Father Benson which has ever inspired his spiritual sons in striving faithfully to keep their vow. Obedience, perhaps the most difficult of the three vows, does not come naturally. It must be cultivated. Richard Meux Benson began the nurture of this characteristic in the nursery. One evening, his nurse discovered the child, Richard, lying, not on his bed but on the floor. When her remonstrances proved ineffective the elder Mr. Benson was summoned. The child's defence before his father was, "I am learning to endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." "My boy," replied Mr. Benson, "the first lesson a soldier must learn is to obey. Get up at once and go to your bed." Richard obeyed.

The Society of Saint John the Evangelist owes its very inception to an heroic act of obedience on the part of its Founder. Father Benson was packed and ready to sail for India as a missionary, when, in deference to his Bishop's wishes, the whole project was abandoned and the Father remained in England, soon to launch his new Community. In 1879 when Father Benson arrived to serve as rector of this church, (then known as the Church of the Advent), the Diocesan refused to licence him. In obedience to the Bishop, Father Benson performed no priestly functions and contented himself with teaching in the schoolroom downstairs. A later Bishop of Massachusetts, who proved to be more of an Anglophile, reversed the

policy of his predecessor, and Father Benson spent seven and a half fruitful years serving in his church. Finally that phase of his ministry was terminated by an act of obedience, for his Superior and brethren at Cowley requested that the Father return to pass the evening of his life in their midst. Bowing to the will of his Community, Father Benson thus left Saint John's for the last time in October, 1899.

Richard Meux Benson knew more than the theory surrounding the surrender of one's will. It was because he had really mastered the virtue of holy obedience that he could command and inspire others to obey. By precept and example he underscored the necessity for complete and utter conformity to the Will of God, as made known through the Rule of Life and the commands of one's superiors. "The vow of obedience", he wrote, "is the gift of ourselves to God, offering up our freedom to Him, and submitting to do the will of those set over us."

To his spiritual sons Father Benson has left explicit instruction as to the nature of the obedience they are to render. They are to obey, not as slaves obey a master, but as free men making an act of faith. They are to obey with promptness and with courage. They are to render, not grudging acquiescence with that which is enjoyed, but heartfelt cooperation with the will of the superior authority. An assigned task is to be carried out, not with the minimum expenditure of effort, but to the best of one's ability. "The practice of obedience", writes Father Benson, "is the constant binding together of the Society by a thousand streams of grace, in loving fellowship with the all-hallowing will of God."

This then, brethren, is the stature of the man whose passing we commemorate at this time. Hear the instruction of this Father to his spiritual sons. Think on these things, and endeavor to understand them. Do not permit this coming Wednesday to pass without recalling the memory of our Father and your Father, and expressing gratitude to God for his sanctity of life. Give thanks for his poverty of spirit, for the dedication of his whole being to his Lord and God, and for his magnificent obedience to the divine vision and heavenly voice. Pray for the grace "to press forward in the way wherein his teaching and example lead us, that with him we may all attain to the crown of everlasting life."

THE VISIT

(*Memories of an English Undergradute*) ANONYMOUS

GEORGE and I sat at a square table in the basement refreshment room of our college shouting at each other. Normal conversational tones were impossible owing to the din made by hundreds of other students all talking at the tops of their voices.

I bellowed: "I can't make up my mind what to do about this summer Vac. I haven't got a home and I want somewhere cheap."

George was a "Catholic" Anglican, taking great pride in his religious practices, such as calling clergymen "Father", speaking of the "Mass", going to confession and attending various "advanced" Churches, and even getting to know their clergy. He had once persuaded me to join a week-end Retreat. Being assured that I was not "letting myself in" for anything he aroused my curiosity sufficiently for me to accompany him. Much to my surprise I enjoyed the silence, but felt I was not playing the game as I was too nervous to go near the priest-conductor, as my friend had urged me.

George grinned at me. I could see he was full of a new idea. "Why don't you go to the Cowley Fathers monastery at Oxford?

"Who are they?"

"Oh monks — but Anglicans. They have their place at Oxford with a guest house. They make no fixed charge for their hospitality, but there is a box for voluntary contributions, if anybody wants to give anything. The food is plain but good; they have a nice garden, and it is near the river."

"Don't make a definite charge! How extraordinary! But do you think they would have me? I can hardly describe myself as a Catholic, and surely they will want references."

"No. I don't think so. I only stayed there for a week's Retreat last year. They have plenty of room and they seem to like undergraduates to come, in order, I imagine, to give them some idea of the Catholic faith as a working scheme. Of course they want one to keep a number of Rules, some of which they are very particular about, such as not talking in the corridors and refectory during silent meals. But it is all quite simple. I believe you would like it there."

"Monks! Do they look stern and fierce? Will they expect me to get up at midnight and fast?"

"Oh no!" he laughed, "they are just human beings like yourself. I hardly know what they do in their own part of the house. I imagine their discipline is strict enough, but they only expect the guests to come to early Mass in the Church and attend Compline in the Chapel at night. Otherwise you are quite free."

"Well, I don't know; sounds all very odd to me. And they really make no charge for their hospitality? In this twentieth century! I can't believe it. I must go there and see for myself. It is incredible! What must I do to get in touch?"

"Oh, just write to the Guest Master, describing yourself and your studies and that you would appreciate a few weeks' quiet for extra study especially as you have no home."

In a few weeks time I descended from a bus and as directed, was walking down a side road lined with small workman's houses. They were clean and well kept, their ugliness being relieved by the splendour of a full grown chestnut tree. I had been told my destination was the gaunt red-brick building opposite the tree. This house was three stories high, with a high slate roof and a tower at one corner. Over the front entrance was the statue of a young man in classical dress holding a cup from which a snake's head appeared. I tried to enter by the gate in the wall in front of this entrance. But after getting hot and irritated, failing to get the gate open, a passer-by pointed out the proper entrance, another gate about ten feet further along.

This opened at once. It was arched over by stone, on the top being a stone cross set in a circle; the first religious sign I had seen. I could see now that there was a grey-stone extension to the brick house, a contrast to the older and dingier building. Above were large leaded light windows, below an archway with steps, leading to the massive Gothic-shaped oak door. I was unpleasantly conscious of the small sliding shutter protected by an iron grille inset into this door through which a visitor could be inspected before it was opened. I thought, "These monks are jolly careful of themselves. It looks as if they expect their house to be besieged by a howling mob!"

There was no bell-push or knocker. I hammered with my knuckles but could make on effective sound. Then a clergyman who I realized must be a Cowley Father by his black skirt and wideawake black hat came up the steps, smiled absently at me, and asked if he could help me. "Yes, Father," I replied (I had been practising saying "Father" ever since I knew I was coming to the monastery.) "I can't

find the bell". Then he smiled broadly and pulled a twisted iron bar at the side of the door. "Come and wait inside, the porter will be along in a minute."

Waiting opposite a large carved crucifix hanging above a wooden settee by the door, I heard the irregular footsteps of a lame man coming down the corridor. He was a little person clad in a shabby cheap lounge suit with a round pink face and a pair of bright impersonal blue eyes. After he had enquired my name, saying I was expected, he told me to follow him.

After mounting and descending two sets of steps and passing along two or more corridors set at angles to each other, one hung so thickly with hats and coats that it was difficult to avoid brushing against them in passing, I was left in a large bare room. The walls were lined with old books, the floor covered with polished lino, the large brown-stained deal table well worn as were the eight or ten chairs arranged around it. The tops of the windows came to a point, the lower half had frosted glass making it impossible to look out (or look in), although glimpses of the tops of the trees and houses opposite could have been seen through the clear upper part.

The impersonal shabbiness of this room impressed me. In my usual surroundings, an effort was made to give a room a touch of colour in curtains and coverings, or perhaps a bunch of flowers, but here there was nothing of that kind. It was a room in the simplest interpretation of the term; warm, dry, light, moderately clean, furnished with the necessary table and chairs with books for information, but entirely lacking anything designed specifically to please the eye.

The appearance of this room, together with the massive front door, the sliding grille and the present silence of the house, made me shyer than usual, in fact, the strangeness of it made me rather confused, and I began to wonder what would happen next.

The Father Guest Master came in quickly, greeted me with a smile, asked about my journey and led me upstairs.

I had been familiar with the title "Guest Master", but I was surprised when he said he would show me to my "cell". My consternation showed in my face, for he immediately began to explain that it was an ancient monastic custom to call the "Bed-study" room a "cell". He then told me briefly the more important Rules I was expected to keep; not to speak in the corridors at any time; not to visit another guest in his cell; not to talk before Terce or after Com-

pline; not to smoke except in the Guests' Common Room, Library or guests garden; necessary to be punctual at meals; not to go into the Father's part of the house or speak to the Fathers in their silence times — and so on.

These simplest rules were mentioned in the gentlest way, yet the speaker knew they would be obeyed. Indeed I was most anxious to do everything my hosts might wish. The suggestion of restrained behaviour was not unpleasant, although it made me rather more timid by the fear of breaking a Rule. But there was also a sense of security, as I now knew what I was expected to do or abstain from doing, and did not have to guess what behaviour the Fathers expected from their guests.

My cell was furnished with the same impersonal lack of interest as the waiting room, with the complete indifference to everything not immediately useful. The selection was plainly the cheapest that was useful. The washstand of the painted deal kind, formerly used in servant's rooms, had a white china basin but an enamel jug. The absence of curtains, carpets and pictures I noted as curious rather than displeasing, for I was myself inclined to look on these things as dust traps.

The impersonality of the two rooms I had seen was repeated, I soon discovered, in every room in the house, including the personal cells of the Fathers. This made me realize, however dimly, that the men who were responsible for this lack of decoration and choice of cheap unassorted furniture must live their own lives with little regard to their surroundings. Indeed it must be the direct result of their "religious profession" and monastic outlook.

Having been told to be punctual at meal times, I made my way down to the hall outside the Refectory a minute or so before the meal was due to start.

Where I stood facing the Refectory in the hall the main staircase of the Fathers' part of the house was to the left. Uncarpeted, polished, oak treads with a stout handrail. It twisted round a lift large enough for four persons, the metal work being painted "battleship grey". In a space besides the lift were hanging the black hats and cloaks of the Community.

I had been shown the House Chapel; it was off the long hospital-style corridor I was looking down now; opposite to its stone arched entrance the Guest Master had indicated the Cloisters which, I was told, were reserved for the Fathers, but guests could go any way they liked in the ordinary gardens.

The Visit

Now the little crowd before the Refectory had thickened. Two aged Fathers came down the stairs with slow deliberation, and stood ready, then, just as the preliminary whirr of the clock before chiming could be heard, the Refectory door was flung open, an anxious young Father quickly came out, and lifted up a large hand bell with one hand and the clapper in the other. At the moment of the first stroke from the clock he vigorously banged the clapper against the inside of the bell. Immediately there was the sound of hurrying footsteps, the door of the Refectory was held open, then there was a pause. Some gestures from the Fathers, then the guests realized they were expected to go in first, which scurringly they did, then the Fathers entered according to their seniority. This was not the quickest way of getting into the room, as everyone had to look around the hall to make sure he was not cutting out anyone senior to himself. Meanwhile the guests stood against the wall facing their places at table, while the Fathers hurried past them towards the upper part, for the guests' places were nearest the door. A newcomer was pushed about somewhat, as the order of seniority was applied to the guests; priests sat "above" laymen, and the longest resident "above" newcomers. This was incomprehensible to me at first, as my place at table was different at each meal, according to the total numbers present.

Strict silence was observed in the Refectory, and as soon as everybody were in their places, the senior Father said the Grace. But the meal did not start at once, for several minutes were given up to listening, in absolute stillness, to some six or seven verses of Holy Scripture read aloud. This brief but complete physical stillness was perhaps my greatest ordeal at the monastery. Very often the food was actually about to be served, and the natural impatience to start eating was very strong. But it would have been as difficult to break the stillness as it would be at any solemn public ceremony. An awareness of the immense strength of their purpose grew in me through sharing this discipline. These Fathers lived always under some restraint, and self restraint gives power.

I could not then have explained it so easily. I was merely conscious that these serious-looking men had found something, or perhaps created an environment, which I now wanted to share. They seemed to have attained a poise, a quiet unshatterable happiness and peace apparently, through the exercise of self-discipline. I did not understand in what the discipline consisted; but I did know I envied them its results.

Three times a day I saw the Fathers all together in the Refectory. If it was a "talking" meal — that is a Sunday, a Festival of a Saint, or Feast Day — I was almost sorry, for they then lost some of their impassiveness which I liked so much. But they were subdued even in their conversation; no loud voices or laughter or excitement were heard, or if momentarily evident, immediately hushed.

But although I noted many things in the Refectory it was the facial expressions of the Community that held my interest. I would go about in the city and gaze at the faces of the crowd, then come back and look at the Fathers gathered here. Not one of them had the ugly lines revealing the tension of being on the alert to seize an opportunity, or of envy or greed or lust. They were not handsome; but there was a universal pleasantness in their faces which I recognised as the result of their disciplined lives, in which the daily emphasis was on the Community activity and not one's own — this I learnt later.

A rarer opportunity of seeing the Fathers together was on Sundays after dinner when the guests were invited to share their Community recreation. This was the only time a guest could go into the Fathers' part of the house, and it never failed to give me a mild sense of an adventure. Their Common Room was down the long corridor from the hall that ran past the chapel; a big room lined with books from floor to ceiling. We sat round the walls with the Father Superior in front of the fireplace, but on these occasions there was no seniority, one sat where one could. Here was much informality of gesture though again no marks of aggressive individuality. I often used to think that here is an interesting group for a painter of the old style, who likes to paint what he sees.

I also caught a glimpse of the Fathers in the choir stalls of their church, but they were separated from the congregation by a carved oak Rood screen, and it was not easy to see them as a group. But in the House Chapel I was below them in the same stalls and could see them plainly, especially the ones on the opposite side. This going to Compline was an ordeal, because one seemed to sit in view of everybody, and I was very shy, nevertheless I went because I did not know what would happen if I stopped away, yet I never had the nerve to look about me, nor dared I even move my head, I could only see those on the opposite side. Here the impression of the individual lost in the Community-act was very apparent; as over thirty or more individuals together knelt, stood up, chanted and sang. Their use of Plainsong helped to underline their remoteness and difference to the world I knew.

The Visit

From the first, Plainsong had always affected me as strange and eerie, although beautiful. I once mentioned this to a person acquainted with technical music; and he laughed saying I was quite right, it is the oldest kind of singing known, and had been in existence thousands of years before the modern harmonized music had been invented. It is a survival from the past, and might well make a listener feel that there were other than material things present.

Despite my timidity and ignorance which I cannot blame anybody for not breaking down, I did one daring thing -- for I was determined to taste of the invisible good things of this house - - I went to Confession. I made anxious enquiries of my fellow guests, because I had received the impression from them that the Fathers were very strict with their penitents, and the suggestion was that fastings and scourges were often given as penances! This was not told me in so many words, but my lively imagination filled in the picture; the words "severe penances" was sufficient to start all sorts of semi-legendary fantasies in my mind. I was recommended to go to a certain ancient Father, who was guaranteed to be very kind and gentle with his penitents. Trembling with fear, dry of mouth, clutching the paper on which I had written my sins, I advanced to the confessional box. Later the priest asked me, before giving me absolution, if I had ever tried to make a meditation — he had recognised me as an ignorant youngster — and as I had not, he said he would lend me one or two pamphlets on the subject. He said how easy it was and an excellent aid to prayer.

The Father could not know the depth of my ignorance. If I had known the fruits of meditation I would have tried it eagerly; but I simply knew nothing of the ways of the Spirit, and had no urge to think about passages of Scripture. I missed the opportunity given me, but I was not yet ready; ten years were to pass before I came to value these things.

One day I heard that one of the Brethren had died, although there was no visible sign of mourning; then, without any preamble the Guest Master asked me if I would care to share an hour's watch in church beside the casket the night before the Requiem High Mass. I gave an eager, if awed, assent to his request.

The next morning at 4 a.m., there was a gentle knock at my cell door. I quickly dressed and, following directions given me the day before, went through the dimly lighted hall, down the corridor, out of the Fathers' entrance through the mysterious Cloisters, into the

vestry. Standing in the doorway I looked into the Sanctuary before the High Altar of the big church.

In this dimly lit, high-roofed space, cut off from the nave by curtains, the casket stood on trestles, covered with a dark cloth with a cross in gold from edge to edge. This was the centre of dim light; as six tall brass candlesticks were arranged three each side, each containing a lighted pale brown candle. At the back, the alabaster of the High Altar dimly glittered, and on each side were the recesses and carved prominences of the empty choir stalls. There were three electric lights also burning, but they were not enough to relieve the gloom.

I could not bring myself to venture into such a hallowed awesome place alone; but my fellow watcher, a Father, came along at that moment and taking me in with him, showed me by a gesture the prie-dieu I was to occupy, placed near the foot of the covered coffin. On the prie-dieu a Prayer book was open at the Psalms.

The scene impressed itself on my memory with its strange unusual setting. No flowers, no gracious touches of rich material, or even beautiful candle holders; nothing here but the coffin, and the essentials for a Christian burial with the full benefit of religious rites. It seemed that even relatives were excluded until the actual burial in the cemetery. I had not been told, but I knew, that the priest and I were reciting Psalms together to strengthen the dead Brother's soul in its first hours of trial in the next world. It needed only a touch to my imagination to picture the angels of good and evil gripped together in a last struggle for the Soul. I prayed earnestly if haltingly, and rose stiffly when a dim figure came forward to take my place.

I attended the Requiem High Mass a few hours later; solemn with ceremonies, singing, incense and holy water. Finally the coffin, with its cloth covering still on, was put onto a little flat cart with four wheels and pushed out of the church by undertaker's men clad in conventional black. A procession was formed outside the church door; it was led by a brother carrying the incense burner, behind him was another carrying a brass Crucifix on a pole, accompanied by others each side of him with candles in glass protected holders. These four were clothed in white from neck to ankle and girdled by white cord. Behind them the coffin was wheeled by the black-clad undertakers, then followed the whole Community in white surplices and black birettas on their heads, walking two by two, finally the ordinary people like myself.

The Visit

It was a ten minutes walk to the cemetery, and we went briskly. I glanced about to see if such an impressive procession would attract a crowd; but of the few people we passed hardly anyone turned to look a second time. To my mind the funeral was perfect in its simplicity; only I should have preferred the coffin to be wheeled by the Brethren and not by strangers, for this was a harsh reminder of the twentieth century, when burials have to be certified and supervised.

Prayer, singing — strangely thin in the open air — incense and holy water were all used in the short service by the open grave. Afterwards all who wished sprinkled a few drops of holy water onto the coffin from the bowl held by a brother in white who stood at the foot of the grave. This was all done in silence, and, stranger as I was, I felt the tears come to my eyes, because this was the last earthly act in a human life, and I also would wish to be cared for in this simple unaffected way; that is, by this austere company, carrying out the ancient rites that I was seeing now.

Just as we were turning to go, an elderly woman quickly came forward, and threw into the open grave a small bunch of flowers. The brother still held the holy water, and he thrust the bowl towards her — a gesture of sympathy. So, fumblingly, she also tossed some drops of the blessed water downwards.

Not long after this, the time arrived for me to leave Oxford, and terminate my stay with the Fathers. I did so with reluctance, for I felt a deep attraction to the place. A few days after I had left, I wrote a rough draft of a letter to the Father Superior asking if I could be admitted to the Community, but later I tore it up, for I knew that it was impossible despite my longing for it. I sensed my ignorant unfitness, rather than knew it for fact.

Slowly the memory of those men whose lives I had longed so inarticularly to share faded from my memory. I never even had the courage to tell George about my attraction to the religious life.

"LIFTING UP HOLY HANDS"

(1 Tim. 2.8)

By Father Everett, S.S.J.E.

(*A sermon preached at the Church of St John the Evangelist, Boston, Sunday, November 16, 1952.*)

(The context reads, as paraphrased, "Now I would have men offer genuine prayer, lifting up to Heaven PRAYING HANDS.")

NEXT to the human voice, our hands are said to be the most EXPRESSIVE of God's gifts, by which sincere devotion speaks to Him. Hands speak — they speak a language of their own.

A parable, no doubt, will help us all to realize this best.

More than two hundred and fifty years ago, there lived two friends who wished to be fine artists. Both were fervent men of prayer. As they were very poor and had to work long hours in other ways than in the study of their holy art, they made no progress. Finally, the elder came to the decision to give up his own devout ambition temporarily, and give himself entirely to earning the support of both; until the younger, thus set free from care, should reach the goal he sought.

Years passed, however, e'er the object was achieved, but all too late for him who had to wait before he could himself begin the thorough practice of the art he loved so well. His swollen joints, due to the roughness of his toils through the years, made all he tried to do in art look cold and lifeless. One day, he plainly saw it was impossible that he succeed. The disappointment nearly crushed his tender heart, but it was not for long. For with an ardent faith and manly courage, he whole-heartedly accepted the inevitable, saying lovingly these gracious words, "God gave to me no gift like that of yours, dear friend, but I am sure He has something waiting for my clumsy hands to do for Him. May He be pleased to bless with hearty resignation to His holy will all praying people in like circumstances; and may they find that all that happens to them is for the best."

While saying this, his hands were placed together, reverently, in devout submission, supplication, and sincere affection. Seeing which, the other seized his pencil, drawing a few lines, with speed and skill. And when the sketch was finished, he exclaimed, "My saint, my doubly patron saint, whose precious hands have earned for me my daily bread; but, more than that, whose faithful, sacrificing prayers have made me what I am in art. Look here! God had ordained that I should make a lasting record of your praying hands. And though

they cannot make a perfect picture, yet they make the perfect *subject* of a picture. So that, in the days to come, these hands of yours will be the stay of many troubled souls."

His words were true — more true than he could know. Because of countless reproductions now distributed throughout the world, that perfect portrait of praying hands, in all its beautiful simplicity, is comforting a multitude of sufferers today. Those hands SPEAK peace to them, and inward fortitude. We, too, need just such hands to SPEAK to GOD for us, in union with those crucified on Calvary.

Brave prayerful sacrifice, yet full of loving confidence; that God still had a work, a work worth just as much the doing. Yes, He has an ever better work for praying hands, one that will never pass away with time, one that lives on, designed to last eternally, when earthly things have perished in oblivion.

Thus, surrendering to GOD our fondest longing, is the best disposal we can make of what He gives to us to give to Him.

May we have grace to make our own the resolution in Psalm 63, "As long as I live . . . will I LIFT UP MY HANDS in Thy Name." And may we do so in the lowly spirit of the little hymn,

"Take my hands, and let them be
DEDICATED, Lord, to Thee,
in humble prayer, most lovingly."

PROFESSION AND CLOTHING OF NOVICES, COMMUNITY OF DEVINE CHARITY
Takasaki, Japan, September, 1952

COMMUNITY CHRONICLE

THE frontispiece of this issue of COWLEY, shows Father Smith, the Deputy Assistant Superior at the Mother House addressing a group of girls at the Summer Camp of the Sisters of the Order of St Anne at Indian Hills, Colorado. The picture was taken in July, 1952, while Father Smith was acting as Chaplain at the camp.

Our other illustration in this issue shows the group of clergy, sisters, and visitors at Takasaki, Japan, in September last, when the first profession of a Sister was held in the Community of Divine Charity, and when four Novices of the Community received the habit. The occasion was described in a letter from Father Dale in the Autumn number of this magazine. Father Kimura, S.S.J.E., is the founder of this little community of nursing sisters.

The Diocese of Dallas, in connection with its Centennial Celebrations, had a number of Preaching Missions at various churches within the Diocese. The Society of St John the Evangelist was privileged to have a large part in this evangelistic effort; no less than seventeen Missions being taken by Fathers of the Society. Besides Father Smith, Father Banner and Father Pedersen of the American Congregation; Father Morley and Father McCausland of the Canadian Congregation also preached Missions in that Diocese. The period of Mission Preaching covered the Days from October 19th to November 16th, 1952, culminating in a great service of Confirmation in the City of Dallas on the latter date.

Father Banner, who is now acting as Vicar of St. Francis' Church, Chicago, remained in Texas at the close of the Dallas missions, in order to visit his family in Fort Worth and El Paso. He returned to Chicago on December 19th.

During Father Banner's absence in Texas, Father Hanlon was in Chicago acting as Priest-in-Charge of St. Francis' Church. He returned to the Mission House in Boston on December 20th, after an absence of two months.

At the conclusion of the Dallas Missions, Father Pedersen proceeded to California, where, in Los Angeles, he was able to arrange a Meeting for the Associates of the Society living in that region. He also visited San Francisco, staying at the Church of the Advent there, where our Fathers ministered for nearly twenty years. After his return to Boston, the Father went on to Maine, where he preached two Missions; one at St. James', Oldtown, during the week of November 30th; the other at the Church of the Good Shepherd, Houlton, during the week of December 7th.

Cowley

The Father Superior conducted a Retreat for The All Saints Sisters at their Convent at Catonsville, Maryland, from November 24th to 29th. He gave an address on *"The Church"* at the Regional Conference of the American Church Union at Christ Church, Portsmouth, N. H., on the afternoon of November 30th. On December 5th, he conducted a Day of Devotion for Associates at St. Thomas' Church, Farmingdale, Long Island, N. Y. An address, given on the morning of December 11th, at the Church of All Nations (Morgan Memorial) in Boston was broadcast over the radio. On New Year's Day, Father Williams conducted a Retreat for the Sisters of St. Margaret at their Convent in Boston; and on January 3rd, he gave another Retreat to the Community of the Holy Spirit at St. Hilda's House, New York City. During the week of January 18th, the Father Superior paid his quarterly visitation to the Sisterhood of St. John the Divine in Toronto, Canada; of which Community, he is the Warden. He will preside and preach at a Profession at St. Margaret's Convent, Boston, on February 2nd; and from February 4th to 15th, he will be preaching a Mission at Grace Church, Hartford, Connecticut. He also expects to conduct the Parochial Retreat at the Church of St. John the Evangelist, Boston, on Ash Wednesday, February 18th.

Father Palmer continues his busy preaching schedule in Canada and the United States. He conducted a Mission at St. James' Church, Milwaukee, from December 7th to 14th. He spent Christmas at the Mother House in Cambridge. From December 28th to 30th, he was at an Inter-Seminary Conference at London, Ontario. From January 12th to 15th, he conducted a Retreat at his Alma Mater, Trinity College, Toronto. He will be at Kemper Hall, Kenosha, Wisconsin, from February 8th to 14th, conducting a Mission for the girls attending this Church School.

Father Gross, the Vicar of the Church of St. Augustine and St. Martin in Boston, gave the "Christmas Message" preceeding a presentation of Handel's Oratorio, "The Messiah", at Shaw House, Roxbury, Boston on December 21st.

Father Smith, the Deputy Assistant Superior at the Mother House, took part in the Centennial Observances in the Diocese of Dallas, as has already been noted. He conducts a week-end Retreat for men at the Monastery from January 30 to February 1. On Ash Wednesday, February 18th, he is to preach at St. Margaret's Church in the Bronx, New York City; from which place he proceeds to South Carolina, where he is to preach five Missions during Lent.

Community Chronicle

Our Winter Community Retreat was held at the Monastery in Cambridge from January 5th to 10th, 1953. The Conductor of the Retreat was the Very Reverend Dom Patrick Dalton, O.S.B., Prior of St. Gregory's at Three Rivers, Michigan. Dom Patrick gave us some very helpful thoughts. We are grateful to him for coming to us, and we look forward with eagerness to his next visit.

Brother Michael Haratani, of our Japanese Province, who is now with us at the Monastery in Cambridge, will, please God, be ordained to the Sacred Priesthood by Bishop Spence Burton, S.S.J.E., at the Church of St. John the Evangelist, Boston, on the First Sunday in Lent, February 22, at eleven o'clock. That will be a very joyous occasion for all of us! Pray that Brother Haratani's life as a priest may be greatly blessed by God.

The Central Council of our Society, which meets once in every five years, will be meeting this year at the Monastery in Cambridge, according to the decision of the Father Superior General. Four of our English Fathers will be coming to America after Easter to represent the English Congregation at this meeting. The Fathers that we are expecting are: The Father Superior General (Father Dalby), The Father Assistant General (Father Bryant), Father Fitch and Father Thompson. It will be a great happiness to have them with us.

FROM MONASTERY LETTER-BAG

LETTER FROM FATHER PALMER

Synod Office
Sault Ste. Marie, Ont.
Oct. 9, 1952

I have neglected writing due to a sort of Franciscan journey away from regular postal service and places to write. I have been on the Manitoulin Island, going all round the parishes. I began at Manitowaring, where our oldest church stands, about 125 years old. I went to all the outstations and had a good visit with the Priest and his wife. He is a Greek and she is Irish, both elderly and happy with each other. He works very hard and has got a lovely little Church built at South Bay Mouth. I visited a lot of homes. Then one night we had the new version of the Bible rally at Midemoya — three hundred and fifty people came from all over the Island. All the Anglican Clergy were there, vested. It gave me a chance to tell how we got our Bible. The United Church is much stronger on the Island than we are, but they accorded us the seats of the mighty. It was St. Jerome's day, which also fitted in well. We had a lovely Mass on St. Michael's day in the old Church at Manitowaring ("Place of the Spirit" in Ojibway). The next event was a Deanery meeting at Little Current. The Church was jammed for the Mass. People had to go into the choir. Then came a terrific "brunch" (breakfast and lunch). The tables groaned. I talked to them afterwards.

It was there I got the bright idea of going over to a vacant parish nearby, and going to see everyone there. Some of the people were at the deanery and took me back with them. In three days I went to every family that had any connection with the Church. I picked up rides to the distant ones, and also went over to Providence Bay, the outstation, and saw everyone there. On the Saturday we had a Mass; as the main Church is called St. Francis, and it was October 4th. I slept and ate wherever I happened to land. We decided to have a Harvest Festival on the Sunday, when the Church was filled, and we "Ploughed the fields and scattered" and also sang "Come ye faithful people come." Next, I went to spend a weekend with another priest. At the next place who should turn up but the "Van Ladies" (Sister Theodora and Miss Davies) with one of the Diocesan vans in which they live. They had come on the Island for a holiday. So I pressed them into service. We went to the far end of the Island at Silverwater. Here a dear woman, rather elderly, has kept Sunday School and Bible classes alive for years. She lives in the parsonage, which is vacant, and is called a Bishop's Messenger. The Church is beauti-

fully clean and well kept. Here we had a service with all Church people present and a party afterwards, and a Mass the following day. Then I went to the Indian Mission at Sheshegwaring (Place of Rattle-Snakes), and visited every home. The Church has been struck by lightning and badly damaged. We had a service and party there. Everyone in these little places responds and sings so well. We made a plan about repairing the Church. Next day we went to Meldrum Bay, the very end of the eighty-mile-long Island. We have no Church, but we visited every family and spoke to children in the school. Then we went to Gore Bay, the chief town of the Island, and had a Mass, another service, and on week days I had an hour with all the town children, grade 2 to grade 8, and then an hour with all the High School children. In the evening thirteen men came for a quiet hour. Very fine type of men, the Mayor was one of them. I still have four more places to visit over the week-end. The weather has been lovely, the maples at their best, and many beautiful views of lakes and hills.

LETTER FROM MOTHER URSULA MARY, O.S.A.

Convent of St. Anne,
Mission of St. Francis of Assisi,
Upi, Cotabato, Philippine Islands.
Feast of St. Francis, 1952.

How I wish you might have been here with us for our Patronal Festival of St. Francis of Assisi! Several hundred people attended the early Mass — Low Mass with hymns and sermon at 6:30, and the church packed with children at the 9:30 Mass — this on the Sunday in the Octave. But on the day itself there was Sung Mass and over 100 present. The girls sang that lovely setting of St. Francis' Prayer — "Where there is hatred, sow peace", etc. In the afternoon, both days, were games — soft ball, volley ball, baseball, etc., and races. Saturday afternoon was quite wet, but the boys were not daunted, and no doubt found the rain rather refreshing, as they ran about clad in next to nothing! The girls, being more particular about their attire, refused to expose their prettily-starched dresses to the vagaries of the weather, and postponed their games till next day, watching the boys perform from the safe vantage of the dormitory *sala,* happily sucking lollipops the while. One group of boys from an outstation came in, carrying bags of rice as their offering, in gratitude for a donation of garments recently sent them. It was a long hard trek over the hills, but twenty-five boys each carried a bag, and spent the week-end here, providing their own meals.

Another group came in Sunday from Nang-i, with the native priest, who came to assist Fr. Strohsahl with the services. Attending also was Fr. Moiket's dog, who is very much at home in church, and even in the chancel. He sat quietly by us as we made our Communion, in quite the Franciscan manner! A votive candle stand has been installed under the lovely painting of St. Francis, and many lighted candles were there. Every morning during the Octave, my class of little children marches in to kneel there and say the prayer of St. Francis, while Sr. Anita's class does the same in the afternoon.

LETTER FROM FATHER DALE

(*Father Dale, in November, had to go into hospital for a minor operation.*)

Oyama Shudoin, Oyama,
Tochigi Ken, Japan.
Sunday, December 14, 1952.

The last time I wrote to you I was still in the hospital. I remained there until December 3rd, having spent sixteen days there in warmth and comfort and with such good nursing care as one usually associates with Phillips House at the Massachusetts General Hospital. Father Chris Morley came for me on the afternoon of December 3rd in the seminary station-wagon and drove me to Bishop Viall's apartment at Aoyama where I stayed till the following Sunday, while the Bishop was away attending some ordinations in Kyushu. He left his house-boy to look after me, and cook my meals, and keep my room warm. I enjoyed being able to go outdoors again and get some exercise on short walks. Bishop Makita (of Tokyo) came to see me one morning in company with our Father Takeda. The Bishop had just returned from a visitation of the Church in Okinawa, where he held confirmations, and he was full of enthusiasm and thanksgiving for his experiences in the islands. It was truly wonderful! One city there of nearly 60,000 in population has drawn up a covenant, signed and sealed by the Bishop and the Mayor and city officials, to consecrate the city and themselves to God, and to seek baptism, and all become members of the Seikokwai — the entire city! In the center, on rising ground, stand the City Hall and a College and School; and there, in the midst, they have set apart a fine tract of land on which they pledged themselves to start at once the erection of a church. To hear the Bishop relate all this was like something out of the Acts of the Apostles — something truly Pauline!

Last Sunday morning, just a week ago, the seminary car came for me again, this time driven by the Dean, Shunji Nishi; and he and

From Monastery Letter–Bag

Father Morley brought me home to the monastery; a very pleasant journey on a bright sunny morning. I was indeed glad and relieved that I was not obliged to cope with travelling on a crowded train, for we are still in the midst of prolonged strikes of coal miners in Japan, and train service has been greatly curtailed on all lines, yet people travel just as much as ever. Father Sakurai and the Brothers were at home on our arrival and gave me a very warm affectionate welcome.

I still have to be careful, for the doctor said I must avoid all strain for another month or more. By Christmas, I hope to be able to celebrate Mass again.

STAMPS FOR MISSIONS!

PLEASE save *all* of your cancelled postage stamps to help our S.S.J.E. Missions in Japan. Anything! U.S.A. stamps and foreign ones, but especially commemorative stamps. Cut the stamps from the envelopes, allowing a neat ¼ inch border of paper around the stamp. When you have an accumulation of them, send the stamps to the Rev. C. C. Keller, St. Francis' House, 980 Memorial Drive, Cambridge 38, Mass. Please tell your friends to save their stamps for us, too!

Save *all* stamps, including common three-cent ones!

BOOK REVIEWS

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FATHER HUGHSON, O.H.C. Holy Cross Press, West Park, N. Y. Pages ix, 251. Cloth, price, $3.00.

AS one runs his eyes through the impressive list of books and tracts which have emanated from the mind and heart of Father Shirley Carter Hughson of the Order of the Holy Cross one cannot but regret that the pen which produced these has now been laid down for good. But this present edition of spiritual letters and excerpts from letters, comes as a magnificent epitaph to the memory of a great priest and director of souls. The fact that the epitaph was written by the man himself makes it particularly noteworthy.

Even those who never had the privilege of knowing Father Hughson personally would observe, from reading his letters, that he was indeed a man of God. Here was one whose heart was fixed upon the high and heavenly, and who, nevertheless, never lacked genuine solicitude for those enmeshed in the earthy. With equal facility he could deal with the concrete or the abstract, as the occasion warranted. One spiritual daughter was ordered to send him a list of twenty-five of her blessings. To one more advanced in the spiritual life he wrote, "Our destiny is to be found in a union with Him (i.e., Christ) in the bosom of the Ever-blessed Trinity".

Inevitably, one who wrote to souls with similar spiritual problems, would repeat his counsel. The editors of these letters deserve commendation for having eliminated repetition by carefully selecting the material submitted to them for publication.

— Robert Cheney Smith, S.S.J.E.

THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER, Seabury Press, Greenwich, Connecticut, 1952. Pages lvii, 611. Red turkey morocco boards, gold edges, gold stamping, special laid paper, hand bound, hand tooled, limited, numbered edition, $150.00; limp red morocco, round corners, gold edges, 50% rag paper, $15.00; cloth boards, $5.00.

ONE of the most beautiful books of the first half of the twentieth century was the Standard Prayer Book of 1928, printed by the late Daniel Berkeley Updike at the Merrymount Press, Boston. The Standard is the edition to which all others must conform, page by page and line by line.

Updike was one of the great craftsmen of our time; he was to fine printing what Charles Connick was to stained glass, and Ralph Adams Cram to Church architecture.

Book Reviews

Our present Standard Prayer Book is dated 1943. In that year General Convention approved a new Lectionary, and a new table of Selections of Psalms. However, the body of the book remained unchanged.

This present edition of the Book of Common Prayer is a photostatic reproduction of Updike's magnificent work, except for those sections which were changed in 1943. This fact explains the special form of the Custodian's certification:

I certify that this edition of the Book of Common Prayer conforms to the Standard Book of 1928, as amended by subsequent actions of General Conventions.

Updike's masterpiece was about the size and shape of *The American Missal Revised;* this reprint is a little larger and somewhat heavier than the usual Chancel Prayer Book.

Lovers of fine printing will want this book, so attractive in its two color printing on fine paper. The cloth-bound edition would be a practical gift to one's public library. The Prayer Book is still one of the greatest missionaries the Episcopal Church possesses.

The limp morocco binding might be a little heavy for carrying to and from church on a Sunday morning, but it is a very fine book for the Prayer Desk and for Family Prayers. With this publication, Seabury Press is really going places.

— Earle Hewitt Maddux, S.S.J.E.

CAVALCADE OF JUSTICE. By Bernard O'Donnell. The Macmillan Company, New York, 1952. Pages 264. Cloth, price, $3.00.

BERNARD O'DONNELL, a Briton of Irish descent, made a reputation for himself this side of the Atlantic in 1951 when his book, "The Old Bailey and Its Trials," was imported by Macmillan. Readers of TIME magazine may recall the crisp characterization: "A hair-raising history of London's famous, once infamous, old court of law and its neighbor, Newgate Prison."

Mr. O'Donnell has done it again in the present volume, also presented by the Macmillan Company. He is by temperament, training, and output a newspaper man — a crime reporter, if you please — than whom there is no toploftier performer in the business, sports writers excepted. In England they are called journalists. And indeed, as a class, they are distinctly superior to their opposite

numbers serving the American tabloids. "Cavalcade of Justice" amply demonstrates this superiority.

The author condenses into nineteen compact chapters a case history of the British system of law and order. Human beings, struggling out of the crudities of savagery into the basic decencies of organic Christian society, form the subject matter, rather than the dry-as-dust jargon of periwig-pated jurists. We trace the emergence of one of Britain's noblest contributions to mankind, the concept and the practice of justice before the law. This, perhaps more than anything else peculiarly British, is likely to survive the global convulsions we are suffering.

Thanks to the kind of men and women Bernard O'Donnell writes about, there will always be an England wherever the scales of justice are held aloft in majestic equal balance. His book is eloquent documentation of a people's true greatness.

—S. T.

UNDERSTANDING EUROPE. By Christopher Dawson. Sheed and Ward, New York, 1952. Pages 261. Cloth, price, $3.50.

WHEN Oswald Spengler first became required reading for the American smart set, his ponderous and gloomy predictions furnished a lively topic of conversation. There was much to be said on both sides, we agreed, but it couldn't happen here; at least, not in our lifetime.

Well, it *has* happened, and Christopher Dawson in his latest book wonders if we can pick up enough pieces out of the wreckage to start over again. In fact, do we know enough, or care enough, to pick up the right pieces?

His thesis is that Western civilization is writhing in *rigor mortis*. The European motherland, he points out, is a shambles physically, morally, intellectually, and spiritually. Global hegemony, as recently as 1914 centered in a European concert of powers, has collapsed beyond repair before the rise of two upstarts, America and Russia, both half-breeds, as it were, as far as the great cultural heritage of the West is concerned.

The gentle writer stands aghast at the prospect of either contender enforcing his collective will on the future. Remember he is writing from an England just about equidistant from atom bombers poised mayhap in Iceland (ours) or mayhap in Latvia (theirs). Therefore, he does not pretend to any academic detachment.

Desperately as a scholar, and earnestly as a Catholic, Professor Dawson pleads for the faith of our fathers as our only salvation from imminent and utter ruin. Not a backward-looking faith, he warns, lest we suffer the doom of Lot's wife, but a faith truly consonant with the present and fully equal to the possibilities of the future.

Traditionalist though he is, he accepts the positive assets of the modern spirit as the starting points for the advance of the faith. Here are his own words: "The greater is our knowledge of nature and man and history, the greater is the obligation to use these increased resources for God, not merly in the way of moral action, but intellectually also, by the re-interpretation of the tradition of Christian culture in terms of the new knowledge, and by relating the instruments of culture to their true spiritual end."

This book should serve as a bracer for the faint-hearted who are more inclined to run for a storm cellar than to man the battle stations. How long shall we be permitted to comfort ourselves with metaphors?

— S. T.

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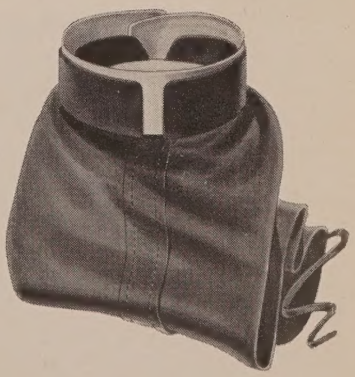

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